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RAVENNA

BY ANNE GOODWIN WINSLOW

*Nulla speranza li conforta mai,
Non che di posa, ma di minor pena.*

DANTE, INFERNO V

How could he write the things he wrote, just here
In her own home where she had once been dear?
I think sometimes he must have caught her eyes
Lighting in swift surprise
Upon those words remote, austere,
Falling from his stern pen,
Just here, just when
She should have seemed most near,
With all the looks and ways
That made that dark house fair,
In the familiar days
While Guido's eagles brooded on the air
That still could kiss her hair.

"No hope of rest or any lesser pain
Shall comfort them again"—
How could he ever bear to think that way,
Here in the tranquil day,
With not a shadow falling on the blue
Of the bright wave she knew?
How could he look on these still cypress trees
Scarce stirring in the breeze,
And write of rushing winds and beating wings
And damned and desperate things?

I like to think the deep, didactic springs
Of those relentless words found birth
In some high region of the poet's mind
While memory lagged behind,—
Being a fond and foolish thing that clings
Forever to the earth,—
And that when afterward he came to look
At what he had to say
Of that young flower that bloomed beside his way,—
Why, then I like to think that in the book
He wrote "no more that day."